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Mindy Stewart

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# Voice Your Health -- Determining Elementary School Students Perceived "Hinders" and "Helpers" to Leading a Healthy Lifestyle

## **Erratum**

This student was a Research Excellence Award winner.

## **Voice Your Health – Determining elementary school students perceived “hinders” and “helpers” to leading a healthy lifestyle**

**Mindy Stewart**

**Faculty sponsor: Alena Clark**

**Purpose:** Research demonstrates that the quality of a person’s diet as well as the level of physical activity greatly influences the likelihood of that person being overweight. Healthful life habits are formed during childhood. Childhood overweight and obesity increase the risk of hyperlipidemia, hypertension, insulin resistance, and respiratory problems. Due to the serious problems associated with these disease states, it is critical to prevent or decrease the rate of childhood overweight and obesity. This project sought to discover the barriers children perceive are preventing them from being healthy and what they believe is healthy. The goal of the project was to increase health and nutrition awareness and increase healthy behaviors.

**Methodology:** Children were recruited through the Evans Recreation Center. Four elementary students participated in the qualitative study. Using the Photovoice technique, the children took pictures over a 7 day period of anything they felt was harming or helping them become healthy. Each participant chose one picture that represented what was harming their health and what was helping their health and answered the following questions:

What is seen here?

What is really happening?

How does this relate to our lives?

Why are things this way?

How could this image educate people?

What can I do about it?

Conclusion: Through an open discussion with the participants regarding their photos, the children identified playing with their friends, exercise, and eating fruits and vegetables as things that help them be healthy. Watching TV, sitting on the couch, not being careful or safe, and eating chocolate were determined to be harming the participants' health. The children all stated they enjoy activities and learning to make healthy snacks. The information provided a helpful insight into what children themselves feel is important. The results of this study were used to plan a nutrition and health intervention occurring during spring 2011.